From the Studio to the Streets:

Service-Learning in Planning and Architecture

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– Mary C. Hardin

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Contents

About This Series
William Zeisel ................................................................. v

Introduction: The Pedagogy of Engagement
Anthony W. Schuman........................................................... 1

Part 1. Designing and Implementing Service-Learning in Architecture and Planning Education

A Core Commitment to Service-Learning: Bridging Planning Theory and Practice
Lorlene M. Hoyt ............................................................... 17

Institutional Support for Community-Based Architecture and Planning Outreach Scholarship at Auburn University
Sharon Gaber and Daniel Bennett ........................................... 33

Where Do We Go from Here? An Evaluative Framework for Community-Based Design
Michael Rios ........................................................................ 47

Part 2. Course Narratives

Research as Ethical Practice: When Academic Goals Align with Community Needs
Mary C. Hardin .................................................................. 59

Achieving Large-Scale Community Development Projects in a Teaching University
Hollie M. Lund and Gwen Urey ............................................ 77

Sore Shoulders, Bruised Ethics: The Unintended Lessons of Design-Build
Scott Wing ............................................................................ 91

Multiplying Knowledge: Service-Learning x Activism = Community Scholars
Jacqueline Leavitt and Kara Heffernan .................................... 99

Beyond Boundaries, Weaving Connections: Reflections on the American Indian Housing Initiative
David Riley, Michael Rios, Scott Wing, and Beth Workman ............. 115
Shifting Ground: Design as Civic Action and Community Building
Paula Horrigan ................................................................. 127

Service-Learning as a Holistic Inquiry and Community Outreach Studios
Joongsub Kim and James Abernethy .................................. 139

Reflection and Reciprocity in Interdisciplinary Design Service-Learning
Keith Diaz Moore and David Wang .................................... 155

Service-Learning in Texas Colonias
Anne Beamish ................................................................. 171

The Electric Greening of North Hollywood: A Case Study in Environmental Design Education Through Service-Learning
Julie A. Dercle ................................................................. 187

Funded Planning and Design Studios: The Master of Infrastructure Planning Program at NJIT’s New Jersey School of Architecture
Darius Sollohub ............................................................... 203

Community Life and Places of Death
Umit Yilmaz and Daniel J. Nadenicek ................................. 219

Contributors ................................................................. 231
About This Series

By William Zeisel

This volume is the 21st in a series of monographs on service-learning in the academic disciplines published by the American Association for Higher Education in partnership with Campus Compact. The series was established as a venue for systematically exploring service-learning in a range of disciplines, through carefully designed essays providing background, salient issues, and important insights gained from experience by faculty and students. The editors of these volumes have been able to assemble cogent and persuasive essays that describe a wide array of approaches to service-learning in educational institutions and communities across the country. Truly, service-learning has become a part of the higher education landscape.

The concept of service learning emerged several decades ago as a potentially powerful instrument for both education and community development. Part of a larger constellation of terms including experiential learning and community-based education, it combines rigorous learning with meaningful service through courses in which faculty and students help community residents address problems or issues they regard as important. Service-learning fits easily into the pragmatic American tradition of education, as explicated by Dewey and others, yet it also rides comfortably with community-activist philosophies such as those of Paolo Freire and others.

Architecture would seem to be an ideal academic field for applying service-learning, since it requires mastery of theoretical concepts for direct application to human situations and needs. And in fact, as the essays in this volume show, the discipline of architecture has long included learning by doing in its mode of teaching. However, only in recent years have the field’s hands-on aspects been subjected to a more systematic appraisal, with an eye to making them formal and even required parts of the educational process.

Not surprisingly, the proponents of service-learning, and their institutions, have often come face to face with significant problems and issues, both professional and ethical. This volume, assembled under the careful eye of Mary C. Hardin of the University of Arizona, identifies and addresses key issues of architecture service-learning, through the experience and reflection of educators who work both in the classroom and, often quite literally, in the field. It is a worthy companion of the first 20 volumes of this series, which appeared under the general editorship of Edward Zlotkowski. The new stewards of the series will strive to maintain the high standards that he set.
Introduction:
The Pedagogy of Engagement

By Anthony W. Schuman

**A Dialectic**

The concept of service-learning, as the essays collected in this volume demonstrate, embraces many impulses, depending on whether the emphasis is on the “service” or the “learning.” Even when the two concepts are thus disaggregated there is still a variety of approaches reflecting different pedagogical and social goals. “Learning,” for example, may refer to “field experience,” the accumulation of practical training to supplement the intellectual foundations laid in the classroom. Co-op programs in schools of architecture or field placements in planning schools support this objective. Design-build programs in architecture schools provide intensive, hands-on construction experience, enabling students to understand what happens in the translation of a design from lines on paper to physical object. In either instance, when the beneficiary of the placement or the built facility is an underserved community or family, one may say that a service has been provided as well. For the learning to be truly service-based, however, implies a more formal connection between the pedagogy and the product, where the service component is also a learning experience and not simply a byproduct.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, advocates of “critical pedagogy” seek to have a more direct impact on contemporary social conditions. Drawing on work by critical theorists including Paolo Freire, Henry Giroux, and bell hooks, they ground their approach in the notion of a transformative process for students and community residents alike. Among educators using a critical pedagogy, in addition to those represented in this volume, one might cite Leslie Kanes Weisman for a consistent application of the principles, Thomas Dutton, whose theoretical investigations are informed by his work at the community design center he founded in Cincinnati’s Over-the-Rhine neighborhood, and Kenneth Reardon, whose action research project in East St. Louis provided a model of interdisciplinary community engagement (Weisman 1999; Center for Community Engagement 2004; Dutton 1996; Reardon 1997; East St. Louis Action Research Project 2004).

Students are encouraged to challenge normative views of education in general, and technical knowledge in particular, in the context of a wider public debate about social equity, diversity, and the distri-
bution of economic and political power in a democratic society. The neighborhood-based planning movement, for example, incorporates Freire’s goal of empowering residents in poor communities through an emphasis on dialogue and reciprocity that values and acknowledges their own skills and knowledge base.

Two principles define the essence of service learning. The hallmark of pedagogy is reflection: What intellectual underpinnings inform the process and how is the field experience used to challenge and refine this thinking? The crux of engagement is reciprocity: What did the students learn and how did the community benefit; or, conversely, what did the community learn and how did the students benefit? Because many if not most service-based learning situations involve an unequal starting point in terms of technical expertise, access to information, and the ability to negotiate with public and private bureaucracies, there is an inherent risk of exploitation where the community setting is used as a laboratory to serve the university.

This essay focuses on two forms of service-learning: neighborhood-based planning and school-based community design centers. Both practices are rooted equally in the academy and in the professions, and the dialectic between the academy and the “outside world,” between the studio and the street, gives these programs their immediacy and their dynamic tension. This dialectic also emphasizes the significance of the historical context in setting the tone and direction for service-learning, particularly in terms of response by the architecture and planning professions to broad social movements.

**Advocacy and Activism**

It is now 40 years since the launching of the first community design centers and the advocacy planning movement. In those heady days of social activism, when dramatic change seemed both desirable and possible, students and professionals alike were impelled by the moral and social imperatives of the Civil Rights movement. Communities marched under the banner “Power to the people” as they fought to stave off the ravages of urban renewal and to challenge the legacy of discrimination that had produced a society whose racial bifurcation was etched in its residential landscape. The turmoil in the streets was matched by intellectual ferment. In a span of five years, three seminal works challenged orthodox modernist thinking about planning, the environment, and architecture: Jane Jacobs’ *Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962), and Robert Venturi’s *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966). Socially committed professionals joined the fray. In 1963, architect C. Richard Hatch established the Architects’ Renewal Committee in Harlem (ARCH), the nation’s first community design center (CDC). The follow-
ing year, at the annual meeting of the American Institute of Planners (forerunner of the American Planning Association), held in Newark, New Jersey, a group of planners including Walter Thabit, Paul Davidoff, David Stoloff, and Chester Hartman, and sociologist Frances Fox Piven founded Planners for Equal Opportunity (PEO) to legitimize social activism within the planning profession (Thabit 1999).

The early impulse toward activism in the planning and design professions was interdisciplinary as well. In Boston, planner Chester Hartman, urban anthropologist Lisa Peattie, architect Robert Goodman, and five others including two engineers, an attorney, a sociologist, and a psychologist established Urban Planning Aid (UPA), during the mid-1960s, to provide pro bono planning services to underserved neighborhoods (Hartman 2002a). UPA sought to help community groups fight urban renewal projects by crafting counter-plans through a participatory planning process. These organizations contained the roots of the advocacy planning movement that launched the neighborhood-based planning approach now incorporated into the municipal planning process in many cities. The significance of this movement was crystallized by Paul Davidoff in his seminal article, “Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning” (1965).

A New Pedagogy

During this period, planning departments were typically lodged in schools of architecture, and the early responses to the social challenges of the day involved students from both professions. My own first job, after receiving my architecture degree in 1970, was with the Community Planning Studio at Columbia University, directed by Robert Kolodny. Pratt Institute’s Community Education Program, started by George Raymond in 1963 as an adult education program within the Department of City and Regional Planning, soon added an advocacy component when Ron Shiffman was brought in to work with a group of ministers from the Bedford-Stuyvesant community. A veteran of the Civil Rights movement through work with the New York chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), Shiffman has described his approach as an urban application of the concept of “rural agents,” part of the extension (outreach) service required of land-grant colleges under their federal charters. This collaboration bore fruit in 1966, when the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corp. was established as the nation’s first community development corporation (introducing a second meaning of the acronym CDC). Architecture and planning students were initially involved in the Pratt Institute program as paid interns, gaining the right to work there for academic credit only after student protests in 1967 (Shiffman 2004).

At Harvard, Chester Hartman, then an assistant professor in the
Department of City and Regional Planning in the Graduate School of Design, established the Urban Field Service, in 1969, as a student version of Urban Planning Aid. Teams of Harvard and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) students from architecture, city planning, landscape architecture, and related disciplines, working under the supervision of faculty members or practicing professionals, offered free technical assistance to community groups in low-income areas.

In Pittsburgh, architect Troy West, then an assistant professor in the Department of Architecture at Carnegie-Mellon University, established Architecture 2001, in 1967, as a community studio at 2001 Central Avenue in the Hill District. He began the project in response to students’ questions about why the architecture program was not engaged in the city around them. In partnership with psychologist Jay Greenfield and local artist Ed Ellis, West developed Architecture 2001 as an amalgam of architecture, planning, culture, and art. The principal project was renovation of a junk-strewn lot into a “Court of Ideas” with murals, performance space, and sitting areas. Other early school-based community assistance programs were Henry Sanoff’s Community Development Group at North Carolina State University, started in 1966, and the Community-Based Projects Program created by Tony Costello at Ball State University, in 1969. Sanoff, notably, moved from Berkeley, where he was teaching, because the Agricultural Extension program at North Carolina State, a land-grant college, could provide the financial and logistical support for his community development projects (Sanoff 2004).

While these early forays into community activism varied considerably in their emphasis, ranging from political confrontation to artistic production, they shared a few salient characteristics. All espoused the philosophy of engaging students in the social issues of the day, and in supplementing classroom learning with direct neighborhood contact. Faculty and students proceeded from the belief that professionals had an obligation to make their expertise available to those lacking the economic or political influence to secure these services on their own, at a time when it was unusual for municipal planning agencies to seek input from neighborhood groups. And they believed that the planning and design professions could make a significant contribution toward improving living conditions in inner-city neighborhoods, a confidence in the social agency of design derived from the progressive social agenda of the Modern movement.

Taking the classroom into the community also meant grappling with the intrinsic problems, both within and outside the academy, of engaging the outside world. To begin with it is inherently difficult to synchronize the semester structure of most academic programs with the 12-month calendar of daily life. Second, academic institutions were often skeptical of these efforts, whose pedagogy was unorthodox
and sometimes brought direct conflict with institutional goals, such as Urban Field Service’s opposition to Harvard University’s expansion plans. Both Hartman and West lost their academic positions as a result of their advocacy and, in Hartman’s case, his open support of the 1969-1970 student strike at Harvard (Hartman 2002b; West 2004). West went on to a long career in architectural education at the New Jersey Institute of Technology, where he taught from 1972 to 2002. Hartman made his mark outside academe with various not-for-profit institutions including the National Housing Law Project, the Institute for Policy Studies, and the Poverty and Race Research Action Council, where he has been since 1990. Hartman was the founder and driving force behind the Planners Network, a national organization of some 700 progressive planners and related professionals and academics.

A New Planning Model

While it would be an exaggeration to suggest that in the late 1960s schools of architecture and planning enlisted wholesale in the cause of social activism, that is where we find the antecedents of the growing emphasis on service-learning in our professional schools. Since those common stirrings, however, schools of architecture and planning have followed quite different trajectories. Of the two, planning education followed the steadier course, mirroring a growing acceptance of neighborhood-based planning in the public sector (Chait 2002). Several factors helped account for this shift in orientation from centralized, technically driven “master planning” to a more inclusive, incremental approach. One was widespread public dissatisfaction with the quality of the urban environment produced by large-scale renewal projects. Another was the emergence of community development corporations as actors in reshaping their neighborhoods. The CDCs grew out of many sources including, notably, faith-based efforts like the New Community Corporation in Newark, New Jersey. More often, CDCs began as community organizing efforts formed in opposition to downtown plans for their neighborhoods.

These groups found that even when they were successful in fighting off highway projects and urban renewal demolitions, they were unable to implement their own counter-plans. A number of these organizations took matters into their own hands and moved into direct development activity as CDCs. Some fell by the wayside because they grew too fast or lacked the expertise to control the development process. Others encountered internal strife and, on occasion, corruption. But a hardy few survived to play an important role in determining the shape of their communities. The Cooper Square Committee on New York City’s Lower East Side, for example, has waged a 40-year campaign to ensure that the Cooper Square Urban Renewal plan ben-
efits the area’s working-class residents in its implementation. Over that span, the committee has built 147 units of affordable housing, renovated 320 more, and created a mutual housing association with more than 400 units under its management. In fall 2003, construction plans were unveiled for a mixed-use, mixed-income development on the original urban renewal site, vacant since it was cleared for urban renewal in the early 1960s (Brozan 2004). In league with other tenant and community advocates, Cooper Square has succeeded in holding the line against the gentrification of the Lower East Side through several periods of superheated real estate markets.

The growth of neighborhood-based planning was helped by an evolution in public policy that favored local involvement. By the late 1960s, in response to local protests and citizen activism, “maximum feasible participation” became an important principle underlying the federal War on Poverty and specific programs such as Model Cities. Participatory planning was seen as a fundamental exercise in democracy. Still, it was not until the late 1980s that neighborhood-based planning began to gain acceptance as a legitimate practice and the concept of participation began to receive more than lip service. Gradually some cities began to institutionalize participation through mechanisms such as the establishment of local planning boards. Even in cases where these boards do not control final decisions about local development, as in the case of the “197-a” planning process mandated by New York City’s Charter revisions of 1975 and 1989, the process gives communities leverage to negotiate eventual outcomes. Today, cities as diverse as Burlington, Vermont, Portland, Oregon, Rochester, New York, and Seattle, Washington, have adopted a neighborhood-based planning approach.

This shift reflects a growing recognition that neighborhood involvement produces better plans. It engenders local “ownership” of the plan that can foster long-term stewardship of public spaces. And it values local residents as assets for their skills and knowledge. As a practical matter, community endorsement means a smoother road to implementation. Communities alienated from the development process are more likely to throw up roadblocks, from demonstrations to lawsuits, that can produce costly delays.

The changing paradigm reflects tendencies from the earliest days of the planning profession as it emerged from a variety of sources: the urban design focus of the City Beautiful movement, the community organizing thrust of the social work and settlement house movements, the reform agenda of good government advocates, the sanitary concerns of public health organizations, and the technical orientation of civil engineering. A tension between physical planning and policy planning was evident from the first National Conference on City Planning, held in Washington, D.C., in 1909. One of the central debates
at that meeting was whether the discipline of planning should focus on improving the physical appearance of a city or on improving the daily life of its inhabitants; in other words, whether the goal of planning was a more beautiful city or, in the words of English planner T.C. Horsfall, “a more beautiful life” (National Conference on City Planning 1909: 77).

These competing orientations continue to influence planning education. The debate over physical versus social planning explains both planning’s attraction to architecture and its skepticism. The profession’s roots in reform and engineering help clarify its faith both in technical expertise and in a government that is ready, willing, and able to address planning issues through a centralized authority, while its antecedents in the social work and settlement house movements emphasize planning at the neighborhood scale. This diverse background would explain both an initial resistance to bottom-up planning as well as an eventual embrace of the practice. In today’s schools of planning, neighborhood-based planning is a significant presence, in some the dominant paradigm. This represents a substantial turnabout from the late 1960s, when the centralized master plan was still the most widely accepted model.

Accreditation procedures in planning education do not require a community-based studio or course, but they do mandate consideration of the role that values play in determining planning policy, including “issues of equity, social justice, economic welfare and efficiency in the use of resources,” and “the role of government and citizen participation in a democratic society and the balancing of individual and collective rights and interests” (Planning Accreditation Board 2001: 22). The Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP) offers two important awards that acknowledge and therefore encourage social engagement. The Paul Davidoff Award recognizes “an outstanding book publication promoting participatory democracy and positive social change, opposing poverty and racism as factors in society, and reducing disparities between rich and poor, white and black, men and women.” The Marsha Ritzdorf Award recognizes “the best student work on diversity, social justice and the role of women in planning” (Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning 2003).

For a variety of complex reasons, analyzed in more depth elsewhere (Forsyth et al. 2000), service-learning has found a more congenial home in planning programs than in architecture departments. One factor is the tighter link between education and practice in the field of planning. While neighborhood-based work remains at the margins of architectural practice, it has entered the mainstream of contemporary planning practice. Key to this trend is a group of practitioner/educators who have moved back and forth between the two domains. Norman Krumholz, professor of urban planning at Cleveland State Uni-
versity, exemplifies this model. Krumholz served for 10 years under three mayors as director of the Cleveland City Planning Commission in addition to separate terms as president of the American Planning Association (APA) and the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP). A growing body of literature, by Krumholz and others, chronicles the emergence of “equity planning” (Krumholz and Clavel 1994).

Service-Learning in Architecture

If planning has demonstrated a continuous evolution toward a socially engaged practice, architectural education has not. On the contrary, the social initiatives of the 1960s and 1970s were soon eclipsed. Robert Venturi’s *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* opened the door to a rediscovery of figural design, and although Venturi and his partner Denise Scott Brown incorporated at least an ironic critique of the status quo in their work, this modicum of dissent was quickly lost in the historicist wave of postmodern architecture that ensued. With Philip Johnson’s pedimented AT&T Headquarters in New York City (1984) as the iconic standard bearer, architecture began a retreat into its “autonomous discourse.” The deconstructionist movement that followed claimed, in some quarters, to be based in a critique of bourgeois convention, but its trappings were more convincingly interpreted as a further retreat into a self-referential formal vocabulary. More recently, the ability to construct digitally produced forms that were heretofore unbuildable, as manifest in Frank Gehry’s sculptural works, has strengthened this tendency to separate architecture from its social and historical context.

Against this trajectory it has been difficult for a socially based architecture to hold its own in the competitive world of the design studio. The successive design trends of the past 30 years, although enriching the design palette in formal terms, have reinforced a narrow spectrum of architecture practice focused on the elite designer and the signature building. Community design offers an alternative to the pervasive design studio exercise modeled on the “star architect” career model. It emphasizes neighborhood fabric over object-building, collaboration over competition, and process over product. It frees students to communicate their ideas in plain English, without the jargon that prevents lay audiences from entering the discussion. There is no “typical” community design project. Students can expect to develop a wide range of professional skills, including land use and building condition surveys, zoning analysis, demographic analysis, cost estimating, public presentation, site planning, urban design, participatory design process, public workshops and design charrettes, and measured drawings of existing buildings.

Community design programs have value far beyond the classroom.
— for the individual, the school, the university, the community, and the profession. The service component that constitutes the core of the movement is increasingly recognized as part of the central mission of higher education, as the Carnegie Foundation report on architecture education and practice so firmly emphasized (Boyer and Mitgang 1996). Universities often have few initiatives that benefit local communities as directly as community design programs based in their schools of architecture. Community service is also central to professional work. The Internship Development Program operated by the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB), a required part of the licensing process in most states, includes a community service component. Community service was a core theme at the American Institute of Architects (AIA) annual convention in 2000, linked directly the concept of leadership.

But community design programs are more than service activities. They are models of interdisciplinary teamwork, often engaging planners, urban designers, and landscape architects as well as scholars and professionals from related fields. They offer complex arenas for scholarship and research. Most importantly, they are proving grounds for creative work, where students and faculty must meet tight budgets and code constraints without compromising design intentions. Students are invariably enthusiastic about community work. As one of my own students exclaimed, “It’s great to have real customers!”

Sustaining a school-based community design program over the long term requires a constant struggle with three economic exigencies. First, the programs and the communities they serve must secure funding for operational expenses and implementation of eventual proposals. Second, faculty salaries cover some basic costs, but operating a year-round program requires additional funding. Third, all community work is vulnerable to cutbacks in public programs that support neighborhood development. On top of this schools must arrange for insurance coverage on the construction site and ongoing liability coverage following occupancy.

Participating faculty must convince their schools that their work in community design is worthy of promotion and tenure. Community design work doesn’t easily fit the standard academic evaluation categories of funded research or scholarly publication. While the work is intensely creative, the end product is rarely a substantial piece of new construction, the form of creative endeavor most likely to receive peer recognition through publication or prizes. In community design work, process is privileged over product, and benefit to the community over traditional esthetic preoccupations. Faculty must convince their colleagues that community design is an integral part of a professional curriculum. By situating practice closer to the routines of daily life than to the esthetic preoccupations of the discipline, community-
based design also runs the risk of being marginalized, not only by architecture school administrators but by design faculty as well.

For community design to be more than simply a traditional design studio using a community client for site and program, there must be additional training in collaborative work methods, running public workshops, and identification of community needs and assets. Under the best of circumstances this would entail a constellation of courses to support the community design studio, and at the least it would require intensive seminars in conjunction with the studio.

To some extent, the difficulties in operating a university-based design program are shared by the independent community design centers. Both are vulnerable to shifting patterns of public policy and financial support; both were severely hurt by the withdrawal of funds during the Reagan years. But the university setting poses additional obstacles. How can “real life” problems be addressed during an academic schedule based on semesters? If projects result in actual construction, who stamps the drawings and assumes liability? Do students receive academic credit for service projects, and if so, what is the pedagogical focus of this work? Does the school-based work compete with local professional services? How are faculty compensated for the intensive time outside the studio?

In 1998, the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA) surveyed member schools to establish an inventory of community design activity. Every school has an occasional design studio linked to local development issues, but ACSA wanted to know which had formal programs that permitted work to continue on a year-round basis, and to compile comparative data indicating how the programs were funded, staffed, and operated. The survey results were published in the ACSA Sourcebook of Community Design Programs at Schools of Architecture in North America, which includes entries on 46 school-based programs and profiles 24 independent centers affiliated with the Association for Community Design. The book also contains useful information on how community service is viewed by the five collateral organizations in the field of architecture, including related honors and awards programs. ACSA had two goals in publishing the book. The first was to help schools strengthen their programs by providing access to information and facilitating communication. The second was to support the visibility and credibility of community design practice at the schools. ACSA also offers annual Collaborative Practice Awards to honor the best practices in school-based community outreach programs. ACSA’s acknowledgment of community-based practice constitutes peer recognition, an imprimatur that helps legitimize this work at schools and universities where community design is not properly understood or valued.

More than half the university-based programs responding to the
ACSA survey were started in the 1990s, a circumstance that may be read two ways. On the one hand, encouragingly, the founding of so many new programs gives clear evidence of an upsurge in interest by students and faculty alike. On the other hand, the data show how difficult it is to sustain a community design program. Only four programs can trace their origins back to the 1960s and an equal number to the 1970s. These surviving programs owe their longevity in large measure to the continuing involvement and commitment of their founding leaders.

To succeed in community-based design you have to do it every day. In November 2000, ACSA presented awards to the three oldest school-based programs — the Pratt Institute Center for Community and Environmental Development (1963), the Community Development Group at North Carolina State University (1967), and the Community-Based Projects Program at Ball State University (1969) — and the two oldest continuing independent CDCs: the Los Angeles Community Design Center (1968) and Baltimore’s Neighborhood Design Center (1968). At the time, significantly, all three school-based programs were still run by their founders. In the words of Henry Sanoff, founder of the program at North Carolina State, “The key to survival for community-design programs is the faculty’s life-long commitment to the principles of community service and to changing the way of how we practice architecture.” Since that November evening in 2000, two of the three community-design veterans have stepped down from their positions. Ron Shiffman relinquished his post at Pratt Institute in 2003. Pratt is enjoying a smooth transition under a new director drawn from the community development movement. At North Carolina State, however, where the program was based entirely in the university and dependent on Henry Sanoff’s leadership, the fate of the Community Development Group was uncertain when Sanoff stepped down in 2004.

As architecture programs moved away from social engagement, planning programs moved away from architecture, an estrangement manifest in the lack of joint activity between the two departments. At some schools the planning department moved its affiliation to other academic units: at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), for example, the Department of Urban Planning moved from the School of Architecture to the School of Public Policy and Social Research; at Harvard the Planning Department switched over to the John F. Kennedy School of Government before reconciling with the Graduate School of Design. The current lack of cooperation between the two professional programs is of concern to both. In 2003, ACSA past-president Bradford Grant and ACSP president Wim Wiewel appointed a joint ACSA/ACSP Taskforce on Architecture and Planning and charged it to “survey graduate planning programs and architecture programs to identify the extent and nature of collaboration between these programs on courses
and projects, and to use this as a basis for making suggestions to our member programs for such collaboration” (Wiewel 2003).

Seizing the Moment

Certainly the social vocation common to both professions offers an avenue for collaboration. Indeed, several schools already offer models of effective interdisciplinary teamwork: the East St. Louis Action Research Project at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign involves faculty and students from architecture, urban planning, and landscape architecture; the City Design Center in Chicago is a multidisciplinary research, education, and service program in the College of Architecture and the Arts at the University of Illinois at Chicago, affiliated with UIC’s College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs.

This is also a moment when socially engaged professionals have received the highest honors from the national organizations in architecture and planning. Planners Network (2004) received the 2004 National President’s Award from the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) for promoting socially informed and community-based planning. Founded by Chester Hartman in 1975 as a newsletter to foster communication among progressive planners, academics, activists, and students, Planners Network evolved into a more formal organization that holds conferences, publishes the quarterly magazine *Progressive Planning*, and maintains a continuing dialogue about social issues in the planning and design professions. AICP President Daniel Lauber credits Planners Network with doing “more to advance the practice of sound, ethical, inclusionary, and discrimination-free planning than any other organization in America today” (Knack 2004: 27).

The AIA awarded its 2004 Gold Medal posthumously to Samuel Mockbee, founder of the Rural Studio at Auburn University, who died in 2001. Perhaps the best known design-build program in the nation, the Rural Studio earned Mockbee a MacArthur Fellow “genius” award in 2000 and has received notice in the mainstream press as well as professional journals. Mockbee required his students to live among the people in Alabama’s rural Black Belt, where they constructed houses and community facilities ranging from a backstop at a sandlot baseball field to a Boys and Girls Club that brought not only a new building but a new institution into a small rural town.

There are other signs of revived interest in social engagement among architects:

- In 1999, Cameron Sinclair and Kate Stohr founded Architecture For Humanity (AFH) to promote architectural and design solutions to global, social, and humanitarian crises. AFH sponsors competitions, workshops, educational forums, and partnerships with other organizations to create opportunities for architects and designers from
Introduction

Around the world to help communities in need. The project list includes transitional housing for displaced people in Kosovo and a mobile HIV/AIDS health clinic for sub-Saharan Africa.

- Also in 1999, the Enterprise Foundation, a national nonprofit housing and community development organization, established the Frederick P. Rose Architecture Fellowship to direct the “passion and skills” of new architects into service in low- and moderate-income communities. A three-year stipend links recent architecture graduates who share a belief in “the value of good design and the spirit of public service” with community development corporations or other community-based organizations. Their work is further supported through an intensive orientation program as well as the annual symposium and conference of the Enterprise Foundation Network (2003).

- San Francisco architect John Peterson founded Public Architecture as a nonprofit, public interest architectural firm in 2002. The project provides pro bono architectural services and has launched an ambitious “1% Solution” campaign to encourage private architectural firms to donate one percent of their billable working hours to pro bono activity (Public Architecture 2003). Bryan Bell, director of Design Corps, a nonprofit firm based in Raleigh, North Carolina, has edited Good Deeds, Good Design: Community Service through Architecture (Bell 2004), based on a series of conferences under the rubric “structures for inclusion.” The essays describe school-based programs, mostly of the design-build variety, that promote community-based architecture. In that same volume, Robert Gutman argues forcefully that the concept of architecture as an autonomous discipline is an illusion, however useful it may have been for a period in the late 20th century in shaking the design professions from ingrained habits. He cautions about the difficulty in sustaining a high level of political activism, and points out that the impulse to use a specific built form to inculcate a desired set of social relations did not bear fruit. With these caveats, Gutman declares that architecture cannot ignore its social context and must respond to the political and social conditions that support its expression (Gutman 2004: 17).

- Architects/Designers/Planners for Social responsibility (ADPSR), founded in the early 1980s to protest the involvement of architects in building fallout shelters and to advocate for an end to nuclear armaments, has evolved to address other issues, from affordable housing and sustainable design to a current campaign to boycott prison design (ADPSR 2004).

The planning and design professions are enjoying an unprecedented level of public interest as a result of the extensive coverage of proposals for rebuilding the World Trade Center site. It is a rare moment, when both the underlying planning issues and the symbolic power of architectural expression are melded in a single cause — a propitious
occasion for architecture to recover its political and social dimension and for planning to use a visioning process as a tool for engaging the public in a participatory process. Service learning, in its many guises, offers approaches through which architecture and planning can reestablish a symbiotic relationship with each other and contribute to the construction of a more beautiful city and a more beautiful life. The essays in this volume describe important work being done in our professional schools toward realizing this goal. They offer insights into both successful initiatives and roadblocks along the way. Most of all, they offer an exhilarating record of how service-learning contributes to a “more beautiful” education.

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Service-Learning as a Holistic Inquiry and Community Outreach Studios

By Joongsub Kim and James Abernethy

Current Trend: Two Prevailing Approaches

This essay discusses several models of holistic inquiry into the built environment that use collaborative and interdisciplinary strategies. Two such examples — a service-learning model and a human equity model — are considered here because they are most relevant to the goals of three community outreach programs of Lawrence Technological University in Michigan: the Detroit Studio, the Pontiac Studio, and a Habitat for Humanity (HFH) project.

The social value of service-learning has received much attention as a possible vehicle to assist in the revival of American community. Sociologist Robert Putnam (2000) and others argue that the ethical bond in American society, what Putnam calls generalized reciprocity, has somehow been lost. This leads to individual isolation and lack of interest in social or collective activity in its many forms. According to Putnam, we stop to help an elderly person change a tire on the road, not because we expect that person to return the favor but because we want to live in a world where that kind of behavior is commonplace. He sees the lack of social interaction, shared understanding of values, and social capital as dissolving a sense of common purpose and community in America.

The service-learning model has also been widely debated in architecture, urban planning, and related fields. Although its definitions vary, its supporters would agree that service-learning is at heart a form of experiential learning that employs service as its primary focus (Crews 1995). It is often referred to as an outgrowth of the Progressive educational philosophy of John Dewey, who advocated for a close interaction of knowledge and skills with experience as key to learning (Ehrlich 1996). The argument is that students require direct involvement with problem solving, not abstractly examining such problems in social isolation by reviewing academic concepts in “the great books.” By integrating community service projects with academic learning, lessons in citizenship and social responsibility can be merged with traditional academic knowledge. Service-learning as a pedagogy links community service and academic study and enables each to strengthen the other. Learning starts with problems and continues with the application of increasingly complex ideas and sophisticated skills to more complicated problems (Ehrlich 1996).
Kraft and Krug (1994) observe that a service-learning program offers educational experiences through which students learn and develop by actively participating in carefully organized experiences that meet community needs. Coordinating such service in collaboration with the community and schools enhances what is taught by extending learning beyond the classroom. This fosters a sense of caring for others with greater needs. Forester’s central thesis (1999) is that citizen participation in complex issues like the quality of housing and urban design often provokes anger among stakeholders and power plays by many. Community designers, planners, and architects can be instruments of social equity by helping disadvantaged communities maintain democratic principles to overcome inequities and private-sector manipulation of resources by special interest groups (Mayo 1990).

Many scholars in architecture have been concerned about education as an agent of socialization, and some of them have contributed essays in several recent publications and reports about architectural education as part of a debate about alternative approaches to teaching a design studio. One such approach pertains to human equity. Arguably, a study by Boyer and Mitgang (1996) best advances the human equity model. Proponents urge faculty to engage in teaching architecture as a socially embedded discipline and practice, and to foster an atmosphere of collaboration and respect in their classrooms. Boyer and Mitgang contend that the curricular and design sequences should foster a climate of caring for human needs by including more frequent contact with clients and communities and by placing greater emphasis on environmental and behavioral design elements. Building to meet human needs means helping architecture students become effective teachers and listeners who are able to translate the concerns of clients and communities into caring design.

A recent report, The Redesign of Studio Culture, by the American Institute of Architecture Students (AIAS 2002) recognizes the design studio as both a challenge and a venue, with the potential for increasing awareness of human equity issues. It calls for change throughout its detailed critique of current practices, emphasizing the need for more diversity in architectural education. In addition to issues of race and gender, architectural education too often ignores other underrepresented groups, the authors argue, when in fact we should be seeking acceptance of all individuals regardless of gender, race, creed, religion, sexuality, socioeconomic background, or physical disability. Consequently, exposure to people with whom we may be less familiar helps strengthen the discipline through a better understanding of how to design for everyone.

The ideas underlying both the service-learning and human equity models, which are closely related to each other, are comparable to the concepts that support the community-based facilities at the Detroit
Studio and the Pontiac Studio, as well as the HFH project in Pontiac. The studios, along with organizations such as Adaptive Environments, advocate for more human-centered curricula and improved access for people who need it the most in schools of architecture (see www.adaptiveenvironments.org). They also favor a holistic view of design that does not separate human health, environmental health, and social justice, and they highlight the essential or vital connections that must be made to create inclusive, healthy, and sustainable neighborhoods or communities. The increasing separation of populations or societies by race and income and the struggle to end environmental racism and gender discrimination are all interrelated community-building challenges and tasks. Such models or approaches also emphasize teaching the goals and techniques of inclusive or universal design in design school programs.

Community design centers or design-build studios housed typically in colleges or schools of architecture have been developed in part on the basis of a human equity model or a service-learning model. They have grown in number, yet rigorous empirical study of their effectiveness is rare, as the 2003 study by Hou and Rios and other research suggests. This paper lays the foundation for a social-scientific assessment of our community-based studios or projects.

Introduction to Three Programs

Service-learning as a holistic inquiry into the built environment uses community-based, interdisciplinary, and collaborative strategies, as well as social-scientific methods, in a design studio or in a building construction project. Working with residents and community agencies in low-income neighborhoods through architectural design studios or design-build projects challenges instructors, students, and other stakeholders to overcome limited resources, such as low resident participation or funding and lack of facilities for community meetings or presentations, as well as communication difficulties (e.g., between student architects and laypersons) and cultural differences (e.g., white suburban students versus black urban residents). Moreover, teaching white students the value of a community-based approach while building a long-term, professional working relationship with poor residents of color imposes an extra pedagogical challenge.

Working with instructors from several disciplines, students collaborate with residents of poor neighborhoods at either the Detroit Studio or the Pontiac Studio. During a typical semester, the studios offer a junior-level course that consists of three distinctive but related components: architecture, urban design, and building systems. An architecture instructor takes the lead, coordinating the three components regarding major studio activities (e.g., joint review sessions,
community presentations). The HFH project represents approximately 10 percent of the student grade for the building systems course, which is taken concurrently with the design projects at the Detroit Studio or the Pontiac Studio. The HFH project is nested within the building systems course, but the HFH undertaking and the studios are distinct programs.

Each studio’s location is an important factor, given the interdisciplinary and collaborative structure of the studio and its typical project content — for example, design of a church in a poor urban area. Each studio is located a short drive from poor urban neighborhoods in Detroit or Pontiac. Each has community-based satellite facilities of the College of Architecture and Design, serving as outreach studios and community learning labs to engage the community and diverse stakeholders in any given project. The HFH involvement adds a community-building construction experience to complement the design emphasis of the studios. HFH projects are located in underserved neighborhoods in Pontiac. Our role has been to partner with the client (HFH) to explore design and construction alternatives that offer improvements in resource conservation and sustainability.

For the last three years, almost the entire junior class (about 120 architecture students) has committed eight hours to the HFH project. Most students are encouraged to sign up for two different four-hour periods so that they can participate in different portions of the construction process. Our approximately 1000 hours represent about one-half of the volunteer hours necessary to build a house. The student activity concludes with individual reports of their activities, comparing the construction systems used at HFH with those most commonly observed in local construction. In general, Lawrence Tech’s commitment to build the major part of 1200-square-foot houses in Pontiac begins with spring and summer meetings with HFH officials, full-time and adjunct teaching colleagues, and the house designer. The course facilitator participates in the official groundbreaking event and students participate in the final house dedication ceremonies. Our construction involves a weekend presence over a three-month period, ending just before Thanksgiving. The house completion is accomplished by other volunteers during the winter months.

The Detroit Studio, in particular, receives project proposals from community organizations or residents who are interested in collaboration. All of the projects are located in underserved areas of Detroit. Proposals are reviewed by the studio’s coordinating faculty and its advisory committee.
Theoretical Constructs and Strategies for a Holistic Inquiry

The projects address the concerns and ideals described earlier in the works by Boyer and Mitgang and others, but specific models proposed by other scholars provide a theoretical underpinning and practical tools. We will discuss the five models below.

Conversation
Schneekloth and Shibley, proposing the place-making model (1995), argue that place making embodies a set of tasks performed to support practice: creating an open space for dialogue about place and place making through good relationships with constituencies or stakeholders; seeking the dialectical work of confirmation and interrogation; and facilitating the framing of action. Such place making can be realized in part through a conversation-based, “constructive” design process to promote more active community participation. Frequent informal but personalized “desk crits,” for example, at the Detroit Studio and the Pontiac Studio emulate intense conversational place making. Regarding the HFH undertaking, selected students and the HFH team are constantly engaged in conversation as issues arise daily at the construction site.

Social Learning
Dogan and Zimring, seeking to demonstrate the social-learning benefit of interaction with clients, argue that the relationship between programming and design is interactive (2002). Programmatic issues and design issues should be clarified together. Accordingly, during this interactive process both client and architect assume significant responsibilities, and clients have the potential to play crucial roles in design. The interactive model suggests that the architect-experts should facilitate the opportunity for clients to play a co-partner role in identifying challenges and opportunities that the project presents and in developing or evaluating design alternatives. Such an interactive process offers the opportunity for each party to learn from the other’s perspectives in diverse social settings. Frequent informative meetings and focus-group sessions with the studio clients and other stakeholders at the Detroit Studio or the Pontiac Studio, as well as constant on-site interaction among the students, the HFH client, and the house designer, provide ample opportunity for rich social learning.

Negotiation
The approach taken in Day’s consensus design model (2002) posits negotiation as an essential component of successful consensus building. Day contends that when professionals design places for people, many things obvious to the residents are overlooked; when places are de-
signed by laypersons, the design can suffer from a lowest-common-denominator effect; when places are designed by both together, conflict often ensues. However, as the author argues, co-design is not doomed to conflict or banality if it is managed correctly. Consensus design teaches us how to reach agreement within a specific time frame with diverse groups of people. Negotiation is one such approach to facilitate consensus. Consensus design can involve people in meaningfully shaping where they live and work. Constructive negotiation can help stakeholders to see opportunities and challenges that each other’s environments present, to recognize the constraints within which they have to work, to live together but differently, and to maintain stable and healthy relationships among different parties. Day argues that consensus can influence social stability, personal health, and building longevity, all of which in turn affect environmental costs. In various reviews at the Detroit Studio and the Pontiac Studio sessions, both formal and informal, all participants are challenged to engage in negotiation concerning design decisions. Similarly, HFH project participants are often involved in negotiation regarding the selection of building materials in terms of budget and construction timing.

Deliberative Design and Practices
Forester, in The Deliberative Practitioner (1999), contends that citizen participation in such complex issues as the quality of the environment, housing, and urban design often provokes anger among stakeholders and power plays by many — as well as appeals to rational argument. Forester shows how skillful deliberative practices can facilitate practical and timely participatory planning processes. He draws on law, philosophy, literature, political science, and planning to explore the
challenges and possibilities of deliberative practice. Forester’s ideas are relevant to architecture since the design and construction context is often fraught with differences, conflicts, and inequalities. A design and building process can shape opinion and create value, transforming not just material conditions but human relationships. Forester’s theory demonstrates the significance of public deliberations that give space to plural voices and strengthen democratic practices. He argues that adversarial situations are not predetermining. In the context of design or construction solutions, they can be negotiated toward collaborative action. Deliberative design and practices should use a process of learning together to craft strategies toward greater community good. Specific examples that promote deliberative design and practices, such as group decision making, workshops, or design charrettes undertaken at the Detroit Studio, or through the HFH involvement, are discussed later (Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4).

Environment and Behavior Perspective
Boyer and Mitgang emphasize environment and behavior in design education and practice (1996). Canter’s “place” model is one such example of a social-scientific perspective. He proposes that place consists of physical attributes, people’s behavior, and people’s meaning (1977). This suggests that an inquiry into a place requires an understanding of its characteristics (e.g., the condition of buildings) and of the people who use it (e.g., activities, demographic information). Given the poverty of the neighborhoods we work with at the Detroit Studio, for example, this would require us to better understand the unique needs of the subgroups within any given place. Such investigation would often require a social-scientific approach, such as a survey. In Detroit or Pontiac, within an audience that is primarily African American, the subgroups often include children and older people as well as people of all ages with disabilities. Similarly, the Lawrence Tech team, in its collaboration with HFH, considers demographic, social, and economic factors in deciding, for example, appropriate building materials through behavioral, observational, and precedent studies.

Drawing upon these findings, we have created a design/research studio or a building construction project using interdisciplinary, community-based, and collaborative approaches to architecture and urban issues. Furthermore, we have explored architectural design or construction conceived as a set of “deliberative” practices. To this end, the Detroit Studio, the Pontiac Studio, and the HFH project focus on the use of architectural design or construction as a tool to promote social learning, negotiation, conversation, and community building. All of these constructs — conversation (a dialogue on common goals), social learning (sharing community perspectives), negotiation (for group consensus), and deliberative practices (fostering participation for cre-
ating community value) — promote community building during the planning, design, and construction of the built environment.

Any given project area becomes a living laboratory for exploring fresh perspectives in community design or building construction, for fostering healthy cultural reform, and for revitalizing the urban environment. The studio or the project serves as a civic design forum for debating contemporary design paradigms, developing arguments for new urban theories, and testing theories. To accomplish this the Detroit and Pontiac studios — in addition to including the typical focus-group sessions, charrettes, neighborhood presentations, crits, and workshops — engage in social-scientific research (interviews, a survey, observational studies, post-occupancy evaluation, and archival research). Research activities include testing hypotheses, evaluating existing facilities, conducting feasibility studies, and formulating design principles. Social-scientific research is also used to evaluate student work and studio outcomes, for example, by testing a design hypothesis through a community survey.

Figure 2. Deliberative design with students and stakeholders, Quinn AME Church Design and Neighborhood Revitalization Project at Detroit Studio

Documentation of studio outcomes involves not just the final product but also the process: what steps we take, how we arrive at consensus, how we resolve conflicts or differences of opinion in design, what disagreements we have, and how we use disagreement to promote consensus. Studio publications include, in general, students’ design and planning works; outcomes of community-based activities (e.g., meetings with residents, community design charrettes), field trips, and site visits; and information on interviews, surveys, and other research tasks. Readers of studio publications would be able to use such process-based information as a practical, precedent-setting edu-
cational resource. In the case of the HFH project, selected students shadow the HFH house leader, documenting the key activities of the day. This graphic and written commentary is intended to assist house leaders in the production of safe, efficient, and accurate results in greatly expanded HFH construction in the future.

Once the semester begins, the students gain direct contact with the studio clients and other stakeholders through site tours, interviews, the survey, meetings, presentations, focus-group sessions, design charrettes, desk crits, and the public reception of the final project. Some meetings and interviews are initiated or coordinated by the students themselves. Also, the studio activities are shared with the entire university via the Detroit Studio’s website (www3.1tu.edu/detroitstudio, currently being renovated) or the university’s sites. The focus-group sessions and a community charrette provide additional special occasions when other students and instructors are welcome to participate.

Specific Processes and Approaches

Understanding the Needs of the Subgroups within a Target Area
The following is an overview of a multifaceted system that we incorporated into the two studios and the HFH involvement to address this issue effectively. For example, regarding the current project at the Detroit Studio (“Community Theatre as a Catalyst for Urban and Cultural Regeneration in Poor Areas of Detroit”), the students have been conducting site, local, and regional analyses of our project area. One of the main goals of the analysis is improved understanding of key demographic characteristics. The class and the Detroit Repertory Theatre (our studio client) met several times to compare notes regarding the findings of research by students and the theater. This was to benefit from one another’s perspectives and to capture a reasonably accurate demographic picture of the project area. In the Lodge/Linwood Area Community Design project, this was done in collaboration with students in an urban planning class from our neighboring university and the studio clients.

The second component of the multifaceted approach is using the initial findings of the demographic analysis as a base from which to reach out to local community organizations. With the assistance of block organizations and other groups, we attempt to identify and understand the unique needs of the subgroups within the target area. Regarding the Southwest Detroit Neighborhood Urban Design project, in the spring 2003 term, the class had a number of meetings at the studio with some of these organizations regarding the needs and concerns of the subgroups and the community at large. In some of the projects at the Detroit Studio, a series of workshop mini-sessions was
held with city planners, developers of public housing, economic and business development agencies, transportation providers and traffic planners, and other representatives of municipal services. The sessions enabled community leaders to gather and exchange information about agency services and public approval. This aided in developing a greater public awareness about the groups’ plans for community redevelopment activities. Students enjoyed ample social-learning opportunities to interact with all participating community groups.

In the Lodge/Linwood Area Community Design project, community leaders representing nonprofit groups and local neighborhood block clubs formed a steering committee whose purpose was to be the primary contact group to facilitate resident involvement and to identify the needs of subgroups. In the HFH project, the students interact with our client (HFH) and the house designer to facilitate social-learning opportunities in which all participants debate types of construction materials and systems so as not to delay the project or strain the limited budget. Our role has been to bridge the gap between our client and the house designer, to suggest the use of various construction materials and systems that will fit the needs of the target residents. These two approaches offer social-learning opportunities through which studio participants can enrich their views on the characteristics of the target community.

The third component is conducting in-depth interviews with representative samples of each of the subgroups regarding their needs. We developed the interview questions for the Community Theatre and Urban and Cultural Regeneration project and for the Southwest Detroit Neighborhood Urban Design project at the Detroit Studio in collaboration with the students, the client, and other organizations based on the outcomes of the second component above. Our students and we conducted the interviews.

The fourth component is using social-scientific methods to explore the needs of the subgroups. Regarding the Quinn AME Church and Neighborhood Revitalization project, the Community Theatre and Urban and Cultural Regeneration project, and the Southwest Detroit Neighborhood Urban Design project at the Detroit Studio, an effort was already underway by us to develop a questionnaire survey in the beginning of the semester. The main goal was to reach the larger population in the target area, especially groups who were underrepresented or reluctant to participate in the in-depth interview sessions mentioned above. Moreover, the conversational and qualitative nature of interviews supported the quantitative data of the survey. The preliminary questionnaire was developed on the basis of additional fieldwork and interviews with the client group and other stakeholders. The students, the client, and the community groups reviewed the draft survey. We had multiple pretests in the beginning of the semester. The
studio conducted follow-up interviews with some of the survey participants who were willing to be interviewed.

**Approach to Review of Students’ Work**

The following describes the philosophy and process used for the implementation of the holistic assessment of the students’ projects at the two studios. A holistic assessment approach incorporates various measures that are inclusive, balanced, and multidimensional. A studio acts both as a community outreach agency and a learning lab to engage the community and diverse stakeholders in a given semester’s project. Both aspects provide ample opportunity for participants to assess the students’ work according to an approach that is interdisciplinary, process- and product-based, incremental and comprehensive, formal and informal, theoretical and practical, and architectural and social-scientific.

![Figure 3. Design charrette with community, Lodge/Linwood Community Design Project at Detroit Studio](image)

For example, in the case of the Southwest Detroit Neighborhood Urban Design project, we did not completely reject the typical, traditional review process where students publicly present their work to expert juries/critics for their comments. Rather, the studio invited the critics to the public arena where their views, points of focus, and review approaches were contested and contrasted with the views of other stakeholders such as the studio clients, local community organizations, and local officials. This public forum exposed disagreements, conflicts, and miscommunications, and all assessing parties had to learn how to reconcile differences among participants of diverse backgrounds and between theory and practice. Participants learned how to arrive at a timely consensus about a successful or desirable response to the issues that the target community and the client group faced.
The key lay in promoting each participant’s ability to manage differences, democratic decision-making, and collective agreement through various review and deliberative processes. These approaches promoted ample opportunities for rich social learning, deliberative practice, and negotiation.

Also incorporated into the schedule throughout the semester are numerous less formal or progress reviews, such as weekly assignment progress reviews, a pre-final review, and individual desk crits — where students have more informal, casual, or conversational but nevertheless focused and personalized attention and input from design-expert critics and laypeople (e.g., studio clients) as well as municipal officials. Arguably, this type of informal review in a non-threatening atmosphere also respects those introverted students who do not always perform well in a traditional review process. Moreover, such casual/conversational, individual-based reviews can benefit nontraditional student groups in the diverse student mix at the Detroit Studio.

For the HFH project, the house designs have suggested features, materials, and systems that exceed code and HFH minimums. Negotiations with HFH, material suppliers, and the house designer sometimes result in tradeoffs. Judging how best to understand these tradeoffs figures in the examination topics as part of the student’s progress review and the project review. In our most recent project, for example, suggestions to use more energy-efficient (and costly) wall and roof framing and insulation were adopted. Recommendations for the use of framing systems that use fewer resources were rejected, though, in order to control budgets and construction timing and to assure adequate student volunteer supervision by trained personnel. The students are aware of these negotiations as they build using the selected systems and materials.
Community-based design charrettes and focus-group sessions provide invaluable venues for testing the students’ design hypotheses and reviewing preliminary design alternatives through hands-on, collective exercises and thematic group discussion in the class and with various participating groups. Moreover, the survey of the studio participants suggests that these events help promote community-building efforts.

On the whole, grading is based on the combined assessment scores of students’ work as judged by all participating reviewers — design experts, studio client, local community organizations, and us. Reviewers use the questionnaire to document their comments or grades for each review. Overall student progress is aggregated and incorporated into the publication of the final studio projects. This is one way to ensure the documentation of the process through which studio progress is made.

In the Southwest Detroit Neighborhood Urban Design project and the Quinn AME Church Design and Neighborhood Revitalization project, the survey questionnaire and interviews were used to assess the overall outcomes of the studio at the Detroit Studio after the semester was completed. This was used in turn to assess the studio from the viewpoint of the clients, other stakeholders, and guest critics.
Conclusion

Students, studio clients, community residents, guest critics, and other stakeholders have participated in a survey and interviews since fall 2002. Based on 45 completed survey questionnaires, which included both closed- and open-ended questions, more than 95 percent of respondents reported that the studio experience was positive in various respects. The benefits included gaining real-life experience, learning from diverse perspectives, experiencing a sense of community, promoting community building, learning from various disciplines, building working relationships with stakeholders, and networking — to name just a few. These findings were corroborated by 20 qualitative interview findings. Respondents frequently commented to the effect that the studio taught them how to work with people who were different from them in terms of age, race, or educational background. “I learned that reality out there is messy,” is a typical comment; “things take so much time and effort... being inclusive and collaborative is so important. ...” The few comments on negative aspects of the experience mentioned disagreements, working on group projects where diverse stakeholders had strong voices on every issue, and not being able to make decisions in an expeditious manner because so many people participated in the project.

Most respondents agreed that the approach taken at the Detroit Studio and the Pontiac Studio gave them an invaluable opportunity to experience place making in a holistic way. The outcomes of the interviews and the survey of participants in this interdisciplinary and collaborative studio demonstrate the considerable benefits of learning from people who represent diverse professional and disciplinary fields. The studio activities promote a better understanding of the cultural, political, and economic fabric that shapes urban design or community design. This in turn helps students understand how design becomes meaningful for a community or neighborhood and how theory and practice are woven into a holistic view of and inquiry into the large-scale built environment.

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