

**“Connecting Downtown to the River:
A Vision for Sustainability and Growth
in Wellsville, New York”**

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ATP PROJECT OUTLINE

PROJECT FOCUS: Alfred State will complete a community visualization study of the Allegany County Village of Wellsville, New York in order to help the residents and municipal officials envision potential strategies for revitalizing their existing business district into a walkable town center with connectivity to the Genesee River.

PROJECT DETAILS:

Course Number, Name, and Instructor:

ARCH 7306 – Design Studio 5 – 6 credit hours

Instructors: Professor William Dean, RA, AIA
Associate Professor David Carli, RA, AIA

Community Partner(s):

Village of Wellsville, New York
Judy Lynch, Mayor
<http://www.wellsvilleny.com/>

Wellsville Area Chamber of Commerce
Brian Perkins, Executive Director
<http://www.wellsvilleareachamber.com/>

Genesee River Wilds, Inc.
William Hart, President
<http://www.geneseeriverwilds.org/wp/>

Need:

Alfred State – SUNY College of Technology is located in Allegany County, one of the poorest counties in New York's Appalachian Region. Communities tend to be very small with limited resources and part-time governments. Local community organizations and municipalities in these Southern Tier counties are especially in need of assistance with respect to long-range planning to create strategies for sustainable development of projects ranging from façade improvements to large-scale infrastructure repair and replacement.

Wellsville, New York, home to a branch campus of Alfred State, is the largest municipality in Allegany County. Like many communities of its size in New York's Southern Tier, the Village of Wellsville is rich in history and natural beauty. However, despite its small-town appeal, the business district shows signs of deteriorating infrastructure and commercial vacancies, and is disconnected from the Genesee River by New York State Route 417, a highway that many officials believe is unnecessary and an impediment to future sustainable growth and development.

Number and description of planned meetings with the community partner:

In addition to municipal officials, business owners and town residents, the students will have the opportunity to meet with architects and planners from a local firm involved in authoring an updated comprehensive plan for the village. The expertise of these design professionals will supplement the faculty instruction in this integrated studio that seeks to align architectural design with the realities of contemporary practice. Initial meetings, both in Wellsville and via teleconference, will occur every two weeks or as necessary leading up to the start of the project. Once the project begins, meetings for data gathering will occur in Wellsville. Both interim and final design presentations will take place on the Alfred State campus and the students will publicly present their work in Wellsville at the end of the project to local stakeholders.

Overview of the project, including its central focus (10-12 sentences):

In Fall 2016, Professors William Dean and David Carli will lead two sections of the Architecture and Design Department's senior Appalachian Teaching Project studio in partnering with the Village of Wellsville, located in New York's Southern Tier, as the subject for the semester's community visualization study. Working individually and in small groups, students will be expected to research and document the subject area and complete a neighborhood development analysis including a visual survey of the defined neighborhood pattern and design of the existing community.

The information generated during this initial research will be used as a point of departure to illustrate a positive vision for sustainability and growth of the Village of Wellsville through community engagement. The overall goal through student engagement of the community is to develop an inclusive community visualization study that includes a series of design interventions based on the village's updated comprehensive plan. The study will include a series of before and thematic after images intended to help stakeholders envision possibilities for future development. Implementation will be possible through grant funding that will require the community to have a clearly defined vision to supplement the new comprehensive plan.

Course Guidelines and Project Goals:

- Students will attend an initial public meeting at Wellsville's Municipal Building organized by the faculty and community partners intended to share existing challenges being faced by the village, and identify sites within the community which are underutilized, have future development potential, or are being promoted for future development. Building/business development opportunities address ARC Strategic Plan Goal 1.
- Working in small groups, students will investigate the Village of Wellsville to collect economic, social, and environmental information, as well as to document the natural and cultural heritage and physical characteristics of the project area. Following the site visit, the studio groups will work together to refine and coordinate the collected information into a seamless neighborhood development analysis of the village. This project goal addresses ARC Strategic Plan Goal 4.

- The studio will complete a community visualization study illustrating appropriate development within the village three, five, and ten years into the future. The study will focus on strategies to leverage Wellsville's industrial heritage and proximity to the Genesee River in order to create a more economically and socially vibrant, walkable, and connected community, and include action items for implementation. The community visualization study will be made available to community partners for use for future planning and for working toward implementation via possible grant funding. A more walkable and connected community promotes resident health and addresses ARC Strategic Plan Goal 2.
- The community visualization study research will be presented by the students to community partners both on the Alfred State campus and at a public meeting in the Village of Wellsville in late October or early November 2016, exhibited at the Community Design Center Rochester (CDCR) in Rochester, New York in early December 2016; and presented in Washington, DC, at the December 2016 ATP Conference. The intention is to present the research once more at the SUNY Undergraduate Research Conference in Spring 2017 pending proposal acceptance. Providing leadership opportunities and reporting on student activities related to the project addresses ARC Strategic Plan Goal 5.

Project Impact:

- There is currently no official forum for Alfred State student participation in Wellsville's planning process, even though student residents represent close to 20% of the village's population. This project will create an open and public dialog between stakeholders in the village, and develop leadership and civic engagement capacity among participating students by providing them the opportunity to be active learners and partners in solving community challenges.
- There is currently limited community input in Wellsville's planning process, despite the best efforts of the local government. This project will serve as a model for studying communities in the region by clearly identifying both existing assets and strategic needs, and creating a visual "report card" for the use of residents and municipal officials in measuring the sustainability of future development.
- There are currently no graphic examples of potential future development included in Wellsville's new Draft Comprehensive Plan. Alfred State's Community Visualization Study will serve as a visual appendix to the new plan, and the recommendations will be made available online for review by all community stakeholders.
- There is currently a limited understanding of Wellsville's connection to the Appalachian region as a whole. This project will enhance student and community awareness of the work of the ARC at the local, regional and state level by providing multiple opportunities for students to disseminate their findings. It will also continue the research partnership between local communities and Alfred State in serving the economic development interests of Allegany County in New York State's Appalachian region.