

**“Master Planning: Cuba, New York
Phase II”**

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Name of Project: Cuba Master Plan Phase 2 Grant Period: February 1, 2011 – June 30, 2012

Grantee Name: Alfred State College Project Director: Professor Craig Clark

Description of Project:

During the Fall 2010 semester, *CIAT 7306 - Design Studio 5: Urban Design*, led by Professors William Dean, AIA, Jeffrey Johnston, and Rex Simpson, AIA, assigned students a town (or town/village/hamlet combination) in the first project, *Survey and Analysis - Allegany County*. Using the defined physical characteristics that represent Urban Design Excellence and Design Linkages as a guide, they photographically documented examples of each as they surveyed their assigned area(s) of focus. The photos were enhanced to clearly illustrate each of the physical characteristics and were presented along with suitable (and enhanced) site plans in a PowerPoint presentation. Accompanying each PowerPoint was a SWOT Analysis that outlined the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats in each area.

Based on the results of this review, the faculty selected Cuba, NY, as a subject area of focus for the more detailed *Master Planning*. Working individually and in small groups, students researched and documented the subject area and completed a site analysis report, reviewed a draft of the *Comprehensive Economic Development Plan*, conducted an in-studio design charrette to generate conceptual ideas and compiled the information generated in the charette into a series of nine different conceptual master plans. The initial presentation was made to the *Allegany County Walkability Committee* and *Universal Design Coalition*, and officials from the Village of Cuba. This work was presented at the Fall 2010 ATP conference in Washington DC.

In Fall 2011, a new group of students in *CIAT 7306 - Design Studio 5: Urban Design* continued the work of last year's group in using Cuba as an urban design laboratory. Each of the three design studio groups reviewed the work completed to in 2010 and used this information as a starting point. Work concentrated on using the history and assets of Cuba to improve the sustainability of the village and town. Each studio group completed a refined and in-depth master plan focused on preserving the historic fabric of Cuba and visualizing suggestions for appropriate development in the future. The three master plans included action items for implementation and were presented publicly by the students to community residents.

Objectives:

1. Educate students and demonstrate the ability to work individually and as part of a team in analyzing the existing conditions of, and generating ideas for, the next phase of master planning for revitalization of the Village of Cuba.
2. Teach students to research and document the subject area, analyze and synthesize the material available, and respond to site variables with community needs in creating a more detailed master plan that illustrates development in phases.
3. Educate students to present their ideas in a public forum including faculty, design professionals, and community residents.
4. Teach students to use multiple graphic methods to document the physical environment of Cuba through the use of three-dimensional physical and computer models to educate the public and demonstrate master planning concepts.
5. Develop college and community partnerships that contribute to the revitalization of Cuba.

Activities:

1. Students were assigned a project to document and research individually as part of a Master Plan. This phase included using the research conducted in 2010 and the documentation (places), research (sources), and presentation (ideas) of the assigned *project* as part of a coordinated studio effort.
2. Students visited Cuba in September and had interviews with several members of the Village Board at the Cuba Village Hall and residents. This included a tour of the several historical buildings key to the revitalization effort and municipal buildings, libraries, and the Historical Society.
3. Following the site visit, each studio group worked together to refine and coordinate the collected information into a seamless Master Plan presentation of Cuba, NY. This included additional research of the site and the project. This presentation graphically addressed the following questions:
 - How can the various proposed projects in the village incorporate the municipalities, districts, or neighborhoods that exist within Cuba, and, what positive neighborhood context (or other man-made features) can be drawn upon for inspiration in the future design development of the area? Is there neighborhood context that should not be taken into consideration?
 - How can the various projects use the most compelling aspects of Cuba's geographic location, demographics, and history (up to present day) that might influence future design decisions?
 - How should the development Density of Cuba and its relationship to surrounding municipalities in the county be incorporated into the master planning projects? How would you describe Community Connectivity relative to residences, basic commercial services, and pedestrian access between the two?
 - What natural, physical features in Cuba are most prominent and should be taken into consideration?
 - How do the sun patterns, wind direction, and overall climate affect Cuba at different times of day and at different times of the year?

- How do vehicles (public and private) and pedestrians move around, on, and through Cuba and its municipalities/districts/neighborhoods? What options exist for public transportation and parking?
 - What sensory experiences (sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and textures) are unique to Cuba and might be drawn upon for inspiration during design?
 - How might the local zoning ordinance affect the physical characteristics of future site use and municipal/district/neighborhood development?
 - Are there any locally, nationally, or internationally recognized interventions that can be studied as examples of urban design excellence on a similar scale?
4. The initial master planning concepts were presented at the college in October 2011.
 5. Based on a review of the site analysis information, each group conducted a mini-charrette in late October 2011.
 6. In early November 2011, the final master plans were presented to a jury of peers, faculty, and community guests.
 7. The presentation in Washington DC, in December 2011, was a highlight of this community based project.

Project Outcomes:

The project was very successful; the Cuba Village Board has had numerous discussions about the project. A community partnership was developed through the development of a master plan for the community.

1. This project developed a partnership between the Allegany County Village of Cuba, NY, and Alfred State College in serving the Appalachian area of New York State
2. This project served as a model for creating sustainable communities in Allegany County by capitalizing on their assets through Master Planning.
3. This project is consistent with the goals of the ARC strategic plan developing a plan for the sustainability of Cuba.
4. This project developed a network of students and faculty across the region who may continue research and service partnerships beyond the current project – expanding this project to include grant-based funding for future classes using the master plans developed.
5. This project developed leadership and civic engagement opportunities among students involved in the project by working with the local and rural communities.
6. Working through the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and being allowed to present at the conference in Washington DC, exposed the students to other communities and how the ARC integrates in other communities.
7. The project enhanced the ability for the Cuba community to further develop avenues to obtain funding for improvement to the community using the master plan.
8. This project and other such planning projects will be shared with Southern Tier West (STW) so these types of plans can be incorporated into the STW planning process for the region.
9. This project is scheduled to be presented at the upcoming Sustainability Conference June 14 to 16 that is being hosted at Alfred State College.
<http://www.alfredstate.edu/events/sustainability-conference>

Problems Encountered:

Participation by the public officials and business owners of Cuba was excellent; however, town and village resident participation was weak.

Program Continuation and Sustainability:

This specific project in Cuba is complete. Next year the Urban Design Studio will select another municipality in Allegany County to assist in the master planning process.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

The project has been a success for both Alfred State College students and the residents of Cuba. The public officials involved with the Cuba plan have expressed that they will be using the student work for pursuing grants to achieve some of the objectives set forth in the project.

The Urban Design Studio plans to continue a master planning project with another community in Allegany County that needs assistance.