

**“Bath, New York Master Plan”**

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Name of Project: Bath, New York Master Plan Grant Period: February 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013

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

### **Description of Project:**

In Fall 2012, instructors in the Architecture and Design Department's senior Urban Design Studio selected the Village of Bath, New York, as the subject for a semester-long master planning project. Working individually and in small groups, forty-three students researched and documented the subject area and completed a site analysis report for each studio which included a visual survey of the defined physical characteristics that represent Urban Design Excellence and Design Linkages within the community. The reports also included a SWOT Analysis developed from conversations with area residents and local officials that outlined the municipalities Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

At the same time, a student under the direction of faculty in the Business Department talked with stakeholders to help them articulate what they felt the real identity of the community was. Concepts of "place branding" and "integrated marketing communications" were then employed to clarify the community's identity in order to promote it as a place to move to, start a business in, or to visit as a tourist/consumer.

The information generated during these initial efforts was used as a point of departure to illustrate and explain a positive vision for sustainability and growth of Bath through community engagement. Students attended public meetings intended to identify sites within the community which are underutilized, have future development potential, or are being promoted for future development by local officials. A community design charrette was also used to generate conceptual ideas for future development. Each studio then completed a conceptual vision plan focused on visualizing suggestions for appropriate development three, five and ten years in the future. The three master plans included action items for implementation and were presented publicly by the students to community residents.

### **Activities:**

1. Students were assigned a project to document and research individually as part of a Master Plan. This phase included the documentation (places), research (sources), and presentation (ideas) of the assigned *project* as part of a coordinated studio effort.
2. Students visited Bath on September 14 and had interviews with several members of the Village Board at the Bath 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 Site Analysis Report for of Bath, NY. This included additional research of the site and the project. This presentation graphically addressed the following questions on September 28:

- What districts or neighborhoods exist within the community 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?
  - What are the most compelling aspects of the community location, demographics and history (up to present day) that might influence future design decisions? Are there any social, economic and/or cultural factors that should be taken into consideration?
  - What is the development density of the community, the mix of building/land uses, and the relationship of both to surrounding municipalities in the area? How would you describe the community connectivity relative to residences, basic commercial services, and vehicular/pedestrian access between the two?
  - What natural, physical features in the community, including quality open space, should be taken into consideration? How do the sun patterns, wind direction and overall climate affect the community at different times of day and at different times of year?  
How do vehicles (public and private) and pedestrians circulate around, on and through the community? What options exist for public transportation and parking? What is the condition of the existing infrastructure in support of walking, cycling, public transportation, social interaction and recreation? How accessible is the community in terms of universal design?
  - What sensory experiences (sights, sounds, smells, tastes and textures) are unique to the community and might be drawn upon for inspiration during design? What is the perception of the community in terms of safety and security?
  - How might the local zoning ordinance affect the physical characteristics of future municipal/district/neighborhood development? How can this information be presented in a more user-friendly fashion?
4. The students participated in a design workshop with local residents and interested residents on September 22 to generate ideas for future development.
  5. Based on a review of the site analysis information and ideas generated during the design workshop, the initial master planning concepts were presented at the college on October 19.
  6. On November 5, students presented the final master plans to a jury of peers, faculty, and community residents. The work was then placed on display at the Rochester Regional Community Design Center gallery, and then re-presented to a larger group of residents in Bath on December 11
  7. The presentation in Washington DC, in December 2012, was a highlight of this community based project.

### **Project Outcomes:**

A successful community partnership was developed with the Village of Bath through the development of a master plan for the community.

1. This project developed a partnership between the Steuben County Village of Bath, NY, and Alfred State in serving the Appalachian area of New York State. The project was presented to the elected officials in November/December 2012.

2. This project served as a model for creating sustainable communities in Steuben 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 Bath.
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 Bath community to further develop avenues to obtain funding for improvement to the community using the master plan.

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.

#### **Problems Encountered:**

Participation by the public officials and business owners of Bath was excellent, but town and village resident participation was relatively weak at first. However, a strong advertising campaign resulted in a strong turn-out for the final public presentation.

There was initially a lack of communication between some community members and local municipal officials regarding the project. A consistent line of communication was never fully established and was an ongoing source of frustration throughout the project.

#### **Program Continuation and Sustainability:**

This specific project in Bath is complete. However, we were asked to continue working on one of the student proposals from the master plan. Two second year students continued to develop the conceptual proposal during the Spring 2013 semester.

Next year the Urban Design Studio will select another municipality in Steuben County to assist in the master planning process.

#### **Conclusions and Recommendations:**

The project has been a success for both Alfred State students and the residents of Bath. The public officials involved with the Bath plan have expressed that they will be using the student work as a stepping stone to more detailed project exploration, and for pursuing grants to achieve some of the objectives set forth in the project. We expect that architecturally-related student engagement activities in Bath will be ongoing for the next year or two. Professor William Dean committed 50% of his time in the fall semester design studio class for this project which is well in excess of the of the required total match of \$1,500, which fulfills the committed cost share for Alfred State College